

Flea-Bite Anemia Zaps Dogs' Energy

Get a handle on fleas to re-energize dog.

By Jon Geller, DVM

Q. My Dachshund is not very energetic lately. He has fleas, and I treat them but it never gets rid of all of them. He used to go up and down the stairs. Not anymore. He has no lumps or bumps, or ticks or other pests, other than the fleas. His eyes are fine and clear. He can go to the bathroom OK. He doesn't limp or favor any part of himself. What could be a possibility? I don't know if it's important to know, but I do also have cats.

A. First of all, you need to completely eliminate all of your Dachshund's fleas with the use of a once-a-month flea medication prescribed by your veterinarian. The constant presence of fleas can lead to flea-bite anemia, in which the fleas began to consume a significant amount of your dog's blood. Not surprisingly, this loss of red blood cells causes lethargy and loss of energy to undertake such tasks as stair climbing.

The other possibility to explain his reluctance to use the stairs is disc disease. Long-backed breeds such as Dachshunds are especially susceptible to bulging discs, which can lead to rear leg paralysis if they become exacerbated by too much activity. Your dog may be taking the sensible steps to minimize the risk of serious back injury and possible paralysis by having you carry him up and down the stairs.

You could reward his sensibility with a visit to your veterinarian for an evaluation of his back and a flea medication prescription.